DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 174 913 CG 013 704

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TITLE Psychology of Women: Cross-Cultural Views and Reviews.
PUB DATE 79
NOTE 10p.: Paper presented at the Annual Convention of the American Psychological Association (Toronto, Ontario, August, 1978)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Achievement; *Cross Cultural Studies; Cultural Environment; *Cultural Interrelationships; *Females; Individual Characteristics; Self Concept; *Socioeconomic Status; *Success Factors; *Working Women

ABSTRACT

A multinational Roundtable discussion on the status of women was held at the meetings of the International Congress of Applied Psychology in Munich, 1979. Participants presented research findings and recommended strategies for eliminating or reducing barriers to women's achievement. There was high consensus that barriers to women's achievement performance emanated from environmental forces, not from personality traits. Different needs in different countries were recognized, as was the compelling need for multinational research. The size and persistence of the audience implied a high degree of interest in cross-cultural research on women. (Author)

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Psychology of Women:
Cross-cultural views and reviews

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Running head: Cross-cultural views

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Psychology of women: cross-cultural views and reviews

My comments are best understood as comprising an overview and report of the discussions at the International Congress of Applied Psychology in Munich (Summer 1979) on the psychology of women.

Under the double auspices of IUPS and IAAP, Professor Germaine de Montmillon organized a multinational roundtable discussion on women. The purpose of the roundtable was to examine research findings on the status and role of women, particularly with reference to the performance and success of women in tasks, jobs, or professional activities and how this performance is perceived, valued, predicted, and explained.

Participants represented different countries and differing aspects of research. Each participant was given time to make a formal presentation of findings and recommendations, after which a roundtable discussion among participants examined these findings and explored ways to implement the suggestions. This discussion was open to the public and at a later point the public was allowed to participate.

I'll summarize briefly the contributions of each participant and follow up with an overview of the discussion:[3]

Kay Deaux, Professor of Psychology, Purdue University, discussed attributions made by people to account for the success and failure of women and men on selected tasks. She found that the performance of men and women is evaluated differently. Men's success is attributed to the internal, stable factor, ability. Women's success is attributed to the

external, probably temporary, factors, effort and luck. The expectations of men and women for the differential performance of men and women follow suit. She cited work by Hielman & Guzzo (in press) who find that people do not think effort justifies promotion but that ability does justify it. Additionally, she found that not only do observers hold differential expectations for the behavior of women and men, but that the men and women themselves agree with such observations -- that is, women are more likely than men to attribute their own success to luck, although effort is a more frequent causal explanation for women's own success. Professor Deaux observed that the majority of attribution work has been conducted in the laboratory in artificial situations and there is a need for field replication and for cross-cultural replication. Furthermore, she pointed out that it is important to relate attribution patterns to variables other than biological sex. She noted some recent findings that women's attribution patterns, when they worked with women, were more likely to be internal and stable; when they worked with men they tended to favor unstable external attributions for their own performance. The implications of differential attributions based on sex in the "real world" need to be examined.

Janet T. Spence, Professor of Psychology, University of Texas, reported findings that instrumental traits are heavily implicated in nAch and that femininity is much more weakly and complexly related. Their research shows a link between personality and achievement performance. Belief systems, exaggerating sex differences, continue to create both internal and external barriers to women's achievement. Recently, the

advantages of viewing masculinity and femininity as orthogonal dimensions has been examined. The average student indicated that instrumentality supressed expressiveness and vice-versa. Although the findings are that this is an incorrect assumption, it does reflect an implicit personality theory held by college students. The correlation of stereotypes measured by the AWS Scale (Attitudes Toward Women) suggests that the relationship between traditionality and stereotypes is strong. Beliefs plus role distinctions reinforce one another. Correlations between attitude and stereotypes and self reports of one's own M/F are low. Further, perceived attributes of parents are a minor component of self-perceived traits. This finding suggests a lack of correspondence between role strain and role conflict. In one study subjects rated (1) Real self, (2) Ideal self, (3) Ideal member of the opposite sex, and (4) Beliefs about the opposite sex's ideal. Each set of ratings were reduced to four categorical assignments (Masculine, Feminine, Androgynous, and Undifferentiated). It was found that women value instrumentality and expressiveness more than do men and that men's views of what women want (e.g., androgyny) was fairly accurate, but women's views of what men want (e.g., more traditional roles) was less accurate. These findings indicate it is critical to correct misperceptions and leadership styles to ensure maximal effectiveness of women and men.

Robert L. Helmreich, Professor of Psychology, University of Texas, viewed achievement motivation as a multidimensional construct including: mastery, work, competition, personal unconcern. He found that high work and mastery plus low

competitiveness is predictive of achievement. Men scored higher on mastery and competitiveness; women scored higher on work and showed less concern than men with the reactions of others. A factor analysis of scores showed women and men similar except for high school women (whose factor analysis structure could be said to amount to "garbage"). When the females' scores were refactored on the basis of career vs home orientation, it was found that career oriented women factor like that of the men. It looks like young high school women may not perceive achievement or instrumental orientation as relevant to themselves. This area calls for extensive research. Women with low vocational aspirations scored lowest on fear of success (perhaps they lack familiarity with the potential negative consequences of success). An androgynous family climate produces males high in work, mastery, and competitiveness. Two androgynous parents produce high mastery, high work females, low in competitiveness (the optimal constellation). Among highly achieving professionals no sex differences in constellations were found, although female scientists are cited 40% less frequently. Concern for negative social consequences of success appeared to result from high success achievement, not caused by it. The barriers to women's attainment lay less in personality and more in social sanctions. We must examine the origins of societal barriers to the "success" of females at young ages.

Gunnella Anna Maria Westlander, Professor of Psychology, University of Stockholm, suggested that the kinds of analyses psychology can do to understand inequality are: (1) those illuminating the consequences of equality, and (2) analyses to facilitate equality. Underlying both of these possibilities

are values. These values must be articulated at the outset of any research. In Sweden in 1977 formal equality was reflected by laws and realized equality was reflected in degree of gout, changes in labor union programs, and practices in the schools. The criteria for equality are unclear and are bound to cultures, even subcultures. She found from studying personnel statistics, policy statements, and by conducting interviews with persons in key positions that equality meant possibilities for women, but not responsibility. There is a need for clear criteria, cross-culturally.

Virginia E. Schien, Associate Professor of Management, The Wharton School, reported findings that the successful manager profile is closer to the average male profile than to the average female profile: "think manager = think male." This increases the likelihood of males being selected and promoted over females. Research is needed in the area of differential performance on the job. In what ways can and does stereotypical thinking impact on the female's ability to perform? (1) Placement --e.g., staff versus line, (2) equal employment and treatment, (3) stereotypical thinking leading to differential task assignments, (4) differential placement, token promotion and task assignment, and the exclusion from the opportunity to acquire power and learn political behaviors. Women, in comparison to men, may have fewer opportunities to acquire power and are excluded from informal networks of power. To the extent that a woman is unaware of subtle pressures and exclusion of women from power networks, her ability to function effectively in a managerial role is diminished.

Graziela Rodriguez de Arizmendi, Professor of Psychology, National University of Mexico, said that the traditional Mexican premise regarding sex role stereotypes is that women are made for "love." In her studies she found that 18 year old women score significantly below men on nAch, and that 15-18 year old women score higher than men in nAffect. Attempts to discover sex differences among occupations was confounded by social class variables. The most dramatic differences found were sex differences in cognitive-perceptual processes among children in grades 1-12 (but no differences were found in children prior to school age). The explanation for such different development appears to lie in cultural learning, particularly among lower class females. In the area of work, the prevalent idea is that women working take away jobs from men. Fifty-nine percent of Mexican women work before marriage, only 14% after marriage. The prevalent value is that woman's place is in the home; 54% of the women think their husbands should decided whether or not they work outside the home. In these data, the level of education played an important role--the level of education for women is low.

In the ensuing discussion among the participants it was agreed that there is discrimination against women, particularly in achievement performance. In view of the findings that women do possess the personality trait constellation conducive to achievement, the salient barriers do seem to be environmental. Suggestions included the need to change prejudicial attitudes, the need to change conditions in developing countries (e.g., access to education), the need to involve male managers in discussing and planning change since they control the business and professional performance arenas. In short, it was recommended

that we must undertake a direct assault on the identification and modification of environmental barriers in many nations. It was agreed that since roles are so often justified on the basis of trait descriptions, it is necessary to distinguish between real and illusory sex differences.

Participation from the audience reflected these same concerns. It was pointed out that there are two groups of women: those who have the possibility to develop (e.g., in the U.S.) and those who do not have that possibility (e.g., in Iran). Agreement focussed on the recommendation to examine developmental variables in various countries, regardless of class or status of subjects.

One person elaborated on conditions in Tunisia. He pointed out that in Tunisia entry into professional life is the critical issue for women, not whether they make it to the top. The current conditions force women who fight for emancipation to leave the family in order to enter professional life. This situation had an adverse effect on relations between husbands and wives and the divorce rate increased dramatically when the law advocated access to work for women. In that country it is necessary to get men involved in opening channels for women and in helping women enter new situations in order to cut down on one dramatic barrier at the outset.

The extent to which representatives of second and third world countries view the difficulties as qualitatively different from those of women in American Society is noteworthy. They see little commonality among women of the world, in contrast to the view of many American researchers that status differences that exist among women are chiefly quantitiative. The compelling need for comparative data is clear.

Footnotes

1. This is a report of the roundtable discussions held in Munich, made to the American Psychological Association meetings in Toronto, 1979.

2. I am entirely indebted to Dr. Virginia O'Leary for notes on the roundtable conference and subsequent report to the American Psychological Association. At my request, Dr. O'Leary replaced me as chair of the roundtable and agreed to make the verbal report to APA. Her willingness to help at a time of emergency is deeply appreciated.

3. Readers seeking more information regarding any presentation should contact that participant directly for possible reprints.